

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NASSAU 01597 272227Z

ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 1597

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, CGEN, BF, HA

SUBJECT: ILLEGAL HAITIAN ALIENS - A HAITIAN POINT OF VIEW

REF NASSAU 1584

1. THE EMBASSY RECEIVED A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE OF THE HAITIAN PROBLEM TODAY FROM MR. ALEXANDRE PAUL, HAITIAN CONSUL IN NASSAU. PAUL IS A CAREER DIPLOMAT WHO HAS BEEN HERE THREE YEARS. THE HAITIAN PROBLEM IN THE BAHAMAS IS THE MAJOR CONSUMER OF HIS TIME AND ENERGY, AND HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS IT.

2. PAUL SAID THERE ARE ABOUT 8,000 HAITIANS IN THE BAHAMAS, OF WHOM ABOUT HALF ARE IN NASSAU AND THE REST IN THE OTHER ISLANDS. HE TOLD THE DCM THAT GCOB ESTIMATES OF HAITIANS IN THE BAHAMAS (20-25000) ARE GROSSLY EXAGGERATED. NO ACCURATE COUNT HAS BEEN MADE BY ANYONE, HE NOTED, BUT HE SAID HE IS IN THE BEST POSITION TO KNOW BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT HE WORKS WITH THE PROBLEM DAILY. HE DID NOT SPECULATE ON HOW MANY MIGHT BE LEGAL OR ILLEGAL.

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PAGE 02 NASSAU 01597 272227Z

3. PAUL STATES THAT THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM IS ANTI-HAITIAN RACIAL AND ETHNIC PREJUDICE PREVALENT IN THE BAHAMAS. HE SAID THAT THE GCOB PERIODICALLY PERCEIVES SOME POLITICAL ADVANTAGE IN CURRYING PUBLIC FAVOR BY ATTACKING THE HAITIAN PRESENCE IN THE BAHAMAS, BLAMING THE HAITIANS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS. HE STATED THERE ARE NO VALID ECONOMIC

REASONS TO DRIVE OUT THE HAITIANS, THEY TAKE ONLY MENIAL JOBS THAT BAHAMIANS REFUSE (THIS BELIEF IS SHARED BY MANY) AND THERE ARE NO PUBLIC WELFARE PROGRAMS IN THE BAHAMAS ON WHICH THEY CAN DRAW.

4. PAUL EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT THE GCOB IS NOW LETTING UP ON ITS CAMPAIGN BECAUSE, HE SAID, THERE HAS BEEN MORE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL OUTCRY AGAINST "THE INHUMANITY" OF THE ROUND-UP THAN THE GCOB ANTICIPATED. HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THERE MIGHT NOT BE ANY ADDITIONAL "ROUNDUPS" FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

5. PAUL WAS RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS ILLEGAL MOVEMENT OF HAITIANS FROM HERE TO THE US, ALTHOUGH HE READILY ADMITTED THAT THE US IS WHERE MOST WANT TO BE AND WHERE THEY WILL GO IF THEY GET A CHANCE. HE SAID THAT THE NUMBERS OF THOSE WHO HAVE GONE TO THE US ILLEGALLY AS THE RESULT OF THE MOST RECENT GCOB CAMPAIGN ARE MUCH SMALLER THAN THE PRESS IS REPORTING. HE SAID HE WOULD GUESS THAT THE FIGURE IS PROBABLY AROUND 700.

6. COMMENT: WE CANNOT EXPLAIN THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN THE NUMERICAL ESTIMATES CITED BY THE GCOB AND BY PAUL. WE ARE REPORTING THEM AS GIVEN FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S INTEREST WITHOUT JUDGMENT AS TO THEIR VALIDITY.
SCHWARTZ

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